Agreement with South Africa in Health and Medical Science

817. SHRI P.N. SIVA: Will the Minister of HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE be pleased to state:

(a) whether India and South Africa have signed any agreement in the field of health and medical science;

(b) if so, the main features of the agreement; and

(c) the extent to which South Africa has agreed to provide health centres and assist India in dealing with HIV / AIDS, Tuberculosis and Nutrition programmes?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT [DR. (SHRIMATI) RITA VERMA]:

(a) No, Sir.

(b) and (c) Do not arise.

Popularisation of Indian Systems of medicine in the World

† 818. SHRI JANESHWAR MISHRA: Will the Minister of HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that Indian System of Medicine is being progressively practiced in the World;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) whether it is also a fact that bio-diversity is on the verge of extinction/collapse due to neglect of our own ancient system of medicine by Government; and

(d) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT [DR. (SHRIMATI) RITA VERMA]: (a) and (b) Traditional medicines including Ayurveda and becoming popular in USA, UK, Germany, Russia, etc.

(c) and (d) Certain medicinal plants have become endangered due to environmental degradation, over exploitation and improper harvesting and not due to neglect of our systems of medicine. However, various steps have already been initiated for the development of medicinal plants which are

† Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.

important part of bio-diversity. Ministry of Environment and Forests are also implementing a scheme of conservation and *in-situ* cultivation. A Medicinal Plants Board has also been set up to look into all matters regarding availability of medicinal plants and coordinate activities to augment their production including *in-situ* conservation.

Exploiting the knowledge about genome by terrorists

819. SHRI LAJPAT RAI: Will the Minister of HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are aware that gene terrorists can cause havoc by exploiting the knowledge about genome and create and agent far more devastating than Anthrax;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) the details of Anthrax cases detected in India; and

(d) the remedial measures Government propose to take to contain Anthrax cases?

THE MINISTER OF HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE (DR. C.P. THAKUR):

(a) and (b) Knowledge about genome can facilitate modification of characteristics of any bacteria / virus to make it more deadly. There are several examples where such changes have taken place naturally like E.Coli 0157:H7, Vibrio Cholerae 0139 and a virulent clone of V. Parahaemolyticus strain comprising of 03 :K6,04:K 68 and 01 :K25 serovars. Similar modifications of other organisms are within the realm of possibility.

(c) Natural Anthrax is endemic in some parts of the country. The data available with National Institute of Communicable Diseases (NICD) is given below:—

States	1999		2000		2001	
	Cases	Deaths	Cases	Deaths	Cases	Deaths
Karnataka	8	5	Nil		4	2
West Bengal	Nil		43	3	Nil	

(d) A Statement is attached. [Refer to the Statement appended to the answer to Unstarred Question No. 797 Part (a) and (b)]